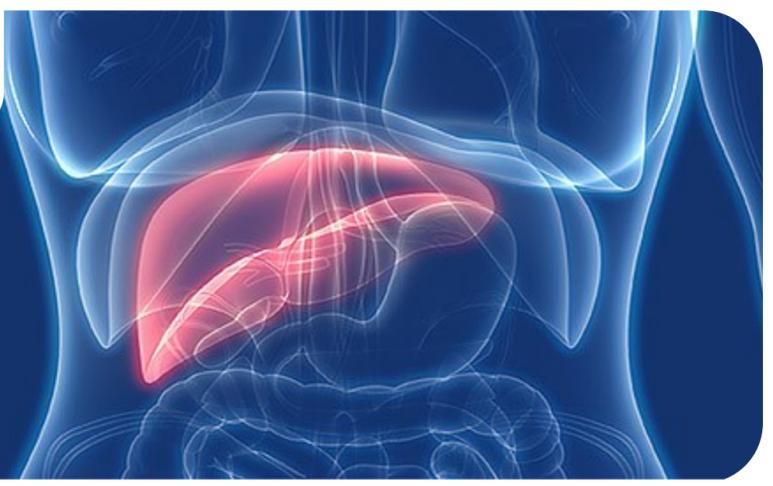




Viral Hepatitis Newsletter

June 2023

Spotlight



Proclamation Inspires Work to End Epidemic

The United States observes Hepatitis Awareness Month every May, this year on Hepatitis Testing Day a proclamation was announced May 19 from the White House. This proclamation included the staggering statistics that thousands of Americans die every year of viral hepatitis, and it urged its readers to get tested. The proclamation also included the newly proposed budget plan for the United States, that has a built-in proposal to fund expanded testing for viral hepatitis, assist in decreasing the high cost of treatment, and support advancements in prevention efforts increasing awareness of risks and cure.

The announcement of the White House proclamation elicits inspiration for us to continue to work toward saving tens of thousands of lives by ending the viral hepatitis epidemic.

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By the Numbers

Hepatitis C is on the rise among those at reproductive age, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) more than 63% of new hepatitis C infections were in adults aged 20-39. Rates of hepatitis C infections nearly doubled from 2009-2014 among people who had live births. Hepatitis C infected mothers transmit hepatitis C infection to their baby in 5.8% of pregnancies (CDC).

Many people at reproductive age are not aware of their hepatitis C infection, without knowing their status they will not seek out curative treatment. The CDC recommends all pregnant persons get tested for hepatitis C, while treatment is not approved during pregnancy, treatment can start after delivery and the completion of breastfeeding, treatment is also approved for children 3 and older.

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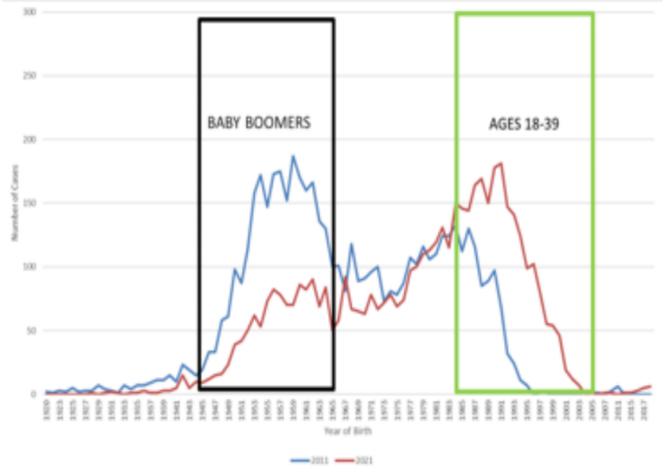
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According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Acute and Chronic Hepatitis C Cases by Birth Year

Historically, the greatest burden of hepatitis C has been among baby boomers (those born between 1945 and 1965) who were likely infected prior to the screening of blood products for hepatitis C. Recently, the incidence of hepatitis C has risen in younger populations, coinciding with the nation's opioid crisis.

The graph shows acute and chronic hepatitis C cases by year of birth, comparing those diagnosed in 2011 and 2021 in Indiana. In contrast to the decrease in incident cases in the baby boomer population, there has been a steady increase in the 18 to 39-year-old population that is associated with people who inject drugs. This age-cohort shift highlights the changing discussions surrounding intervention strategies across the state and the need to implement CDC's recommendation that every person 18 years or older be tested at least once in their lifetime.



Connect to Cure

Together the Damien Center and the Health Foundation of Greater Indianapolis are launching the Connect to Cure initiative, with funding from the Indiana Department of Health's Health Issues and Challenges Grant Program. Now all Hoosiers will have increased access to hepatitis C testing, care and support across the state of Indiana.

"By increasing opportunities for testing and treatment, we can help Hoosiers know their status sooner, and get connected with the resources that can lead to a cure," said State Health Commissioner Lindsay Weaver, M.D., FACEP. Indiana ranks in the top six states who are most likely to eliminate hepatitis C by 2030, the Connect to Cure initiative will serve to further improve hepatitis C prevention and care in the state of Indiana.

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Community Advocate Award

In 2013 Brittany Gross was starting her new career at the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) as the viral hepatitis prevention coordinator. After 10 years of advocacy and dedication, Brittany Gross the IDOH viral hepatitis services program manager, was presented with the Community Advocate Award from the Health Foundation of Greater Indianapolis. This award was granted to Brittany for her many diligent contributions in the field of viral hepatitis. A well-deserved honor as she continues to work hard toward the mission of a state, country and world without viral hepatitis.

RIGHT: Brittany Gross (left) Jason Grisell

PRIDE and Stigma

How can we do better?

June is Pride Month! Pride is both a celebration of the wonderful characteristics of LGBTQ+ individuals and a time to reflect and support those who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. Negativity can arise about people, circumstances, or health symptoms, often resulting in barriers that decrease access to health services and social support systems that are required to improve outcomes.

No matter how you identify, you can help reduce stigma and decrease the negative health effects of stigma by reporting discrimination, educating others by challenging myths and stereotypes, being aware

of your attitude and behavior, and supporting those in your life who are experiencing stigma.

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Hepatitis Resources

For more information on Viral Hepatitis:

[CLICK THIS LINK](#)

To find a testing site near you:

[CLICK THIS LINK](#)

For help with Hep C, Connect to Cure:

[CLICK THIS LINK](#)

To promote, protect, and improve the health and safety of all Hoosiers

